

FIVE QUESTIONS

With Frank Gerdeman

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1. What services does Vermont Adult Learning provide?

VermontAdultLearning, under the umbrella of the statewide Learning Works, is an adult education and literacy center that is pretty evenly split between English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which serves our refugees and immigrants, and students who are working on their high school credentials and building skills. We offer GED (General Educational Development Certificate), a High School Completion Program (HSCP) and Vermont Adult Diploma Program (VADP). We tailor the plan to the needs of the student and what we can realistically provide. We have a three-hour intake and orientation with each student to determine where they are and where they want to go with their education.

2. At what age is a student considered an adult in your programs?

In Vermont, it is age 16. And Vermont is one of

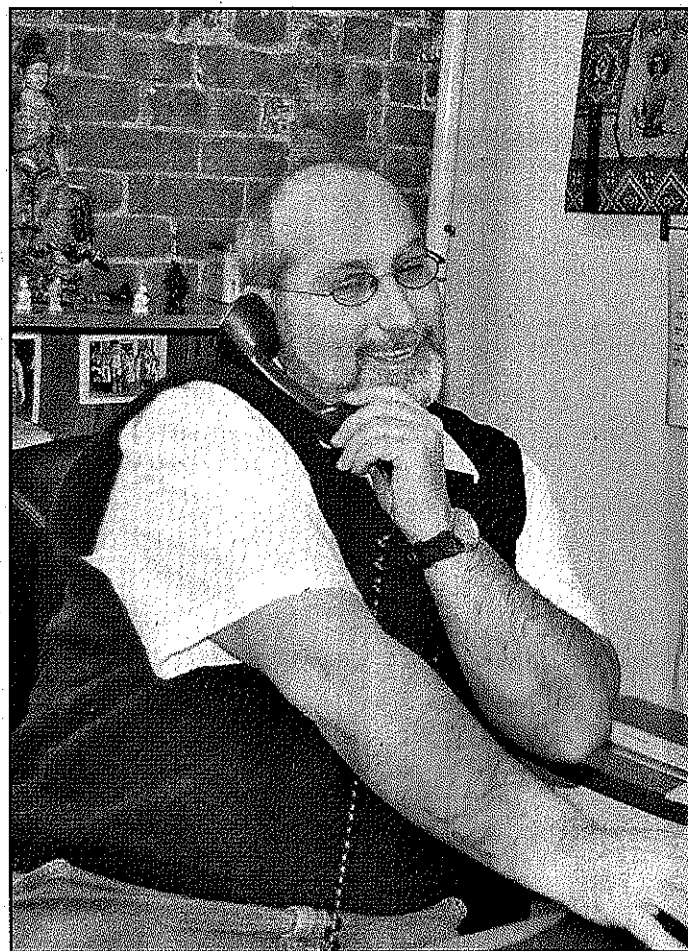
the few states that allows students to take their GED at 16. Tests are given three times a month, including Saturdays. To pass the GED, students must pass five tests in reading, writing, social studies, science and math.

3. Where do the students attend their classes?

We have a number of classrooms including here at the offices (in Fort Ethan Allen), at Sloane Hall (on nearby Ethan Allen Avenue), Sara Holbrook Community Center (on North Avenue, Burlington), VNA Family Room (on Allen Street, Burlington) and the King Street Youth Center (King Street, Burlington), on Church Street in Burlington and Milton.

4. How many students do you serve and how big is your staff?

Year to date, we have served about 700 students. Last year, for the full year, we had about 1,200 students and we expect to have about



Frank Gerdeman works in the Vermont Adult Learning offices in Fort Ethan Allen on Tuesday.
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the same number this year. On the adult education side, we have seen a steady increase, which is not surprising in this economy. Those without a high school diploma are often the first to be let go from their jobs and they come to us to get their GED and to upgrade skills. We have a staff here of 24.

5. What is something that readers might be surprised to learn about Vermont Adult Learning?

People are usually surprised that our services are free. We are here when someone is ready and able

to commit to education. The only cost is a \$15 fee for GED testing, and students in need won't likely have to pay that fee. We are funded primarily through the state Department of Education. About 30 years ago, the state decided that adult education would be more efficiently provided through nonprofits, and five years ago, the state put all of the adult education services around the state under a single system that was more consistent called Learning Works. So if you lived in Burlington and moved to Brattleboro, you would find a similar program.